

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Tuesday, March 21, 2000

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. MORELLA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 21, 2000.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CONSTANCE A. MORELLA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a concurrent resolution of the following title in which concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 96. Concurrent Resolution recognizing and honoring the members of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) who are being awarded the AHEPA Medal for Military Service for service in the Armed Forces of the United States.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 106-31, as amended by Public Law 106-113, the Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, appoints the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. FRIST) to the Russian Leadership Program Advisory Board.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

BEFORE NEW GUN LAW, ENFORCE ONES ON BOOKS

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, it reflects well on the human condition that tragedy often brings out the best in people: compassion, resolve, under-

standing. Sometimes, unfortunately, a tragedy can also release the darker human impulses: cynicism, dishonesty, and opportunism. It is a regret that many times individuals will take advantage of a tragedy to promote an ill-conceived agenda.

Last month, the Nation was stunned by the shocking death of 6-year-old Kayla Rolland in Mount Morris Township, Michigan. This young girl was killed in a classroom by a fellow student, a 6-year-old boy. This loss echoed beyond the family involved, her school, and their community. It touched all of us, evoking a sense of nationwide grief and dread.

Madam Speaker, sadly, it was not long before the heartbreaking death of this girl was transformed into a means of a lot of political points. That very day, the President announced that this tragedy should be an election issue. He went on to demand passage of various gun-control measures.

First, we should look at the facts of this matter and consider what difference this administration's proposals would have made. Chuck Green of the Denver Post did this for us when he asked these questions in a recent column:

Did the little boy have a concealed-carry permit?

Did the little boy purchase the weapon from an independent dealer after failing a background check by a licensed dealer at a gun show?

Did the little boy use false identification when purchasing the weapon?

Did the little boy use an illegal automatic weapon in the assault?

Did the little boy have an older person, possibly a 9-year-old child, purchase this gun on his behalf?

The answer to this killing is not to be found in too few gun laws, but rather in how this boy was raised. He was living with his uncle and another man, sleeping on the couch in the living room.

It was a home reportedly with a constant flow of strangers seeking crack and trading guns. The .32 caliber pistol used to kill the girl was stolen.

Now, I expect that some of my colleagues would claim that child safety locks would have prevented the shooting in the classroom. Now, selling crack is illegal, as is trading for guns. Do they really think that these individuals would have obeyed a law requiring safety locks?

I would also remind my colleagues that Michigan already has a number of State laws targeting gun violence on

the books. These are some of the laws: prohibit selling any firearm to a minor under 18; prohibit possession of a handgun by person under age 18; prohibit possession of any firearms, including BB guns on school property; prohibit possession of even a BB gun beyond the yard of a minor's home unless accompanied by a person over 18; prohibit intentionally pointing, even without malice, any firearm at another person; require that all handguns must be registered; require a license to purchase a handgun from a dealer or a private individual; void the handgun license if not used within 10 days of issuance; require theft of a gun to be reported to police within 5 days of discovery.

Gun violence is a scourge on our Nation, and we have a responsibility to tackle this plague, not with empty gestures, but with solid action. Instead of passing new gun laws, we should enforce those already on the books.

Here in Washington, for example, there are 2,400 violent crimes committed with firearms in 1998. Only two criminals were prosecuted in Federal court for these gun crimes. This is not uncommon. A study by Syracuse University found that Federal prosecution of gun crimes has dropped, has dropped by 44 percent since 1993.

However, only a 2-hour drive from here, where I am speaking, vigorous Federal action has helped to reduce gun homicides in Richmond, Virginia, by one half. Project Exile is an effective, anti-violence program promising Federal prosecution and an additional 5 years in jail for felons caught with a gun. In Richmond, more prosecutions under Federal gun laws took place than in California, New Jersey, New York, and Washington, D.C. combined.

The President and his supporters want to create a false sense of security by enacting more laws with little or no real impact on the problem. A stronger commitment to enforcing the laws already on the books will do far more to protect our communities and our school rooms from gun violence.

GUN VIOLENCE UNDERCUTTING AMERICAN VALUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MORELLA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague discussing the issue of gun violence, but I could not disagree with his assessment more.